

EDUCATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND IMMIGRATION

In the knowledge-based global marketplace of the 21st Century, a well-educated population is the key to America's innovation, economic development and ability to compete. The United States must have a workforce that is entrepreneurial, innovative, problem-solving, civically competent and equipped with technical skills. Creating a competitive workforce involves "Cradle through Career" strategies to strengthen the emerging workforce pipeline, to retool the incumbent workforce and to access an international talent pool.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Partnership supports increased federal investment in early childhood education programs coupled with strong accountability systems that measure results, ensure high program standards and expand the number of children served, including the creation of a voluntary federal preschool grant program.

America's continuing efforts to improve education and develop a world-class workforce will be hampered without a federal and state commitment to early childhood education for three- and four-year-old children. In today's world, where education and skill levels determine future earnings, the economic and social costs to individuals, communities and the nation of not taking action on early childhood education are far too great to ignore, especially when the benefits far outweigh the costs. The research is clear that the return on investment is linked to quality education. Simply increasing participation without ensuring program quality will not produce positive results. Not only does high-quality early childhood education make a difference for children, it matters to employed parents. Employers increasingly find that the availability of good early childhood programs is critical to the recruitment and retention of parent employees.

K-12 EDUCATION

With a steadily climbing poverty rate in Iowa, the already underfunded Title I program is more vital than ever. In 2000, 27 percent of Iowa kids qualified for free and reduced lunch. Today it is 42 percent statewide. In Des Moines Public Schools, it has gone from 45 percent in 2000 to 75 percent today. The cycle of poverty can be reversed by giving these students the extra support needed to successfully enter the workforce.

The Partnership supports implementation of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),

with a focus on high standards, quality assessments and resources for schools in most need.

Accordingly, The Partnership supports the following ESSA principles:

- Expect internationally benchmarked standards and assessments to reflect readiness for college, workplace and international competition. The standards and assessment requirements in ESSA should:
 - Incorporate challenging state-developed, common, internationally-benchmarked standards and aligned assessments tied to college and workplace readiness.
 - Be based on annual assessments of student achievement in math and reading, while working to establish assessments aligned with Next Generation Science Standards of student achievement.
 - Base annual progress measurements on rigorous measures of year-to-year growth in academic achievement tied to specific goals, including goals for specific subgroups of students.
 - Provide for the fair and comprehensive participation of special needs and English Language Learning (ELL) students with particular focus on “at risk” students and high-needs schools.
- Invest in school improvement and encourage technology and other innovations to improve student achievement. Improving schools in the 21st Century is not a static process; it requires constant innovation and research focused on what works. The implementation of ESSA must include support for high-quality research and proven reform initiatives by:
 - Supporting expansion of high-quality virtual instruction options blended with traditional instruction, with the same level of accountability required for other public schools.
 - Supporting academic-focused extended learning time initiatives, including after school and summer programs that collaborate when possible with community-based organizations.

- Expanding opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework, such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate, early-college high schools or dual enrollment programs that prepare students for college and careers.
- Utilizing advanced communications technologies to improve delivery and increase effectiveness for students and teachers with optimization of online learning tools and multiplatform devices and systems.
- Supporting federal initiatives to connect more students to the digital age through next-generation broadband and high-speed wireless infrastructure in schools and libraries, and initiatives to provide more students with one-to-one access to digital devices that allow students to access high-quality content both at school and at home.
- Supporting federal initiatives that invest in improving the technology skills of teachers, ensuring that every educator receives support and training to use technology to help improve student achievement.
- The reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) that supports Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs by:
 - Strengthening connections between secondary and post-secondary education through programs of study development.
 - Improving the academic and technical achievement of students who choose to enroll in these programs.
 - Promoting innovative partnerships, accountability and equitable access to high-quality CTE that meet the needs of the nation's students and employers.
- Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act., The bipartisan reauthorization will grant flexibility and relief for school districts to successfully administer school meal programs by:
 - Increasing reimbursement levels and other federal funds to cover the cost of compliance and authorizing local school districts to make implementation feasible within available federal resources, such as

granting flexibility for whole grain content and sodium reduction targets

- Increasing stakeholder engagement (including school boards) in policy and implementation.
- Implementing improved and coordinated inspections, notifications and other protocols to ensure the nutritional value and safety of foods served in the school lunch, breakfast and snack programs.
- Placing restrictions on requiring school districts to redirect non-federal funds from instruction and other district services to the school food authority in order to comply with federal mandates.

Further, The Partnership supports:

- Professional development Title II funds for teachers, which has a substantial effect on student performance. Investment in this program needs to continue.
- Funding of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which are used to provide after school programs including job skills and computer training, as well as summer enrichment programs to increase students' success. Continuing this program is critical for helping the most vulnerable kids successfully complete an education.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Sustaining the nation's economic competitiveness requires that an increasing share of the workforce hold post-secondary credentials or advanced college degrees. The federal government through its policies, programs and funding has a significant role in promoting higher post-secondary attainment by citizens. Federal policies which impact institutions offering post-secondary programs and individuals participating have historically been beneficial, and for many continue to be so. For other individuals, however, the multiplicity and complexity of federal initiatives has had the unintended impact of working against the ability to expand the numbers of citizens achieving these goals. The upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and upcoming budgetary and appropriations debates in Congress provide an opportunity to address these concerns by prioritizing, streamlining and simplifying access to federal post-secondary education programs, and simplifying the regulations which impede institutions from expanding options for distance learning and other useful initiatives.

Therefore, as a part of the reauthorization of the HEA and in federal appropriations, The Partnership supports:

- Education and tools to allow consumers to better understand the individual costs and benefits, and the ability to repay financial obligations related to college. The Partnership encourages federal officials to seek and promote best practices by state-based organizations and post-secondary institutions that can help address the need for better education in this area.
- Higher education tax incentive programs designed to help make college more affordable and the continuation of tax-based financial assistance to offset post-secondary education expenses in any future tax reform efforts.
- Keeping higher education accessible and affordable by maintaining funding for need-based student aid programs, including Pell Grants and federal student loan programs, increasing federal investments to serve students seeking in-demand, credit and non-credit credentials and retaining and improving higher education tax incentives.
- Simplification of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and related application processes for federal financial aid for college students in order to enhance the ability of more individuals to qualify for assistance. Simplification of federal student loan repayment options in order to make it easier for borrowers to understand options, and easier to choose for and enroll in the most advantageous option for each personal situation.
- Ending the federal tax on loan forgiveness for student loan borrowers who die or become entirely and permanently disabled.
- Supporting the legislation introduced to treat student loan repayment benefits paid by employers the same for tax purposes as the treatment of tuition payment benefits.
- Simplifying the process for educational institutions to provide distance education opportunities for students in other states. The Partnership recommends the U.S. Department of Education grant authority to institutions to provide distance education without additional requirements from states where students are not physically located or other third parties if the following criteria are met:
 - The institution is registered in the state in which it is physically located.

- The institution is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.
 - The institution is eligible for Title IV aid.
- Continuing to provide opportunities for state, local and nonprofit organizations to assist in expanding post-secondary opportunities through the use of tax-exempt bonds for student assistance programs, allowing use of such means to fund student loan refinancing options and additional regulatory means of supporting such state-based efforts.
- Strengthening of federal financial aid programs and encouraging innovations of systems that work to improve college access, college affordability and college completion.
- Increasing opportunities for internships for students enrolled in post-secondary curriculum.
- Strengthening international programs, such as the Higher Education Act Title VI and the Fulbright-Hays Programs.
- Providing prospective higher education consumers with a sufficient range of qualitative and quantitative information to allow individuals to find the “best-fit” institutions as opposed to a single rating metric which does not take into account diversity of missions, student populations and communities of the nation’s colleges and universities.

STEM POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

America’s research universities are essential to the matrix of innovation that is the foundation of the nation’s economic competitiveness and long-term economic growth. The Partnership strongly supports the innovation and competitiveness agendas that focus on enhancing the government’s support for basic research and strengthening the nation’s talent pool in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. To help address needs in STEM fields, The Partnership supports enhancing STEM competitiveness by:

- Implementing the America Competes Act to increase the number of engineers and scientists.

- Continuing support for federally-funded research and development at colleges and universities that contributes immeasurably to the supply of new knowledge that the nation needs to maintain its competitive position in the world.
- Continuing funding for the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program, a National Science Foundation-administered STEM program, which supports partnerships between community colleges, local industries, secondary schools and four-year institutions to train skilled technicians of all ages for careers in the ever-changing high technology workplace.
- Continuing funding for the STEM Talent Expansion Program (STEP).
- Offering loan forgiveness and scholarships for STEM degrees.
- Supporting portable STEM graduate fellowships.
- Continuing support for Graduate and Professional Students by enhancing the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) and Javits Programs.
- Acknowledging health care positions as STEM-related fields by developing innovative academic models using evidence-based STEM research in partnership with high schools, health science colleges, health employers and community stakeholders to respond to the changing health care delivery systems and workforce preparation.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Partnership supports efforts to create a federal employment and training system that is driven by the actual needs of employers based on accurate and timely regional labor market data. Given the quickening pace of change in workplace technology and the growing demand for flexible, highly-skilled employees in all sectors of the economy, not even the most experienced workers can afford to rely on existing skills. To remain competitive, businesses must invest not just in the preparation and recruitment of new talent, but also the continuing development of workers at all stages of a career.

The Partnership supports investing in the workforce by:

- Promoting stronger connections between adult education and workforce, supporting career pathways, sector partnerships and serving people with barriers to employment through continued funding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Providing adequate federal funding for adult education and English as a second language in the FY 2018 budget. A total of 36 million adults have limited English, reading or math skills that prevent pursuit of middle-skill credentials, but just 1.5 million are served annually through federal programs. The Partnership supports increased funding for the WIOA Title II program.
- Pass the Jumpstart Our Business Startups (JOBS) Act to expand Pell eligibility to short-term post-secondary certificates. Employers need more workers with short-term, middle-skill certificates, which are a stepping stone for entry-level and low-wage workers.
- Passing the Community College to Career Fund Act to provide dedicated support for partnerships between industry and community colleges. Community and technical colleges could use these funds to support high quality training in partnership with local industries, workforce boards and other stakeholders.
- Passing legislation redirecting the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to support apprenticeship and other work-based learning. Many businesses are investing in work-based learning to help entry-level employees advance, but WOTC does not reward employer investments after making a hire. The Partnership supports the need to shift these dollars to reward employers who make upskilling a priority.
- Reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and passing legislation to lift current restrictions on TANF skills training. Fewer than 10 percent of adults receiving TANF have post-secondary education, an essential tool for transitioning to family-supporting jobs.
- Maintaining Adult Basic Education (ABE) funding to help upskill Iowa workers. Federal funding for ABE is currently authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), also known as Title II under WIOA.

- Funding Wagner/Peyser Employment Service (ES) activities under Title III of WIOA at current levels to ensure job seekers can access these key labor exchange services and to support greater alignment between the ES and other federal workforce investments.
- Continuing the Career Pathways Innovation Fund, Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED), High Growth Job Training, General Education Development (GED) and ABE initiatives and enactment of the Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success (SECTORS) Act to promote workforce development efforts.
- Continuing funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant program, which helps community colleges improve career and technical education offerings that lead to high-demand, high-skilled occupations.
- Continuing support for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), which helps workers, firms and others negatively impacted by trade.
- Continuing to fund the Senior Community Service Employment Program and the TAA in order to sustain federal training programs to ensure adequate parameters for serving older workers in an ever-changing global workforce. In today's economy, workers are likely to need frequent skills updating in order to remain competitive. Older workers will continue to need training, help with job placement and other assistance as individuals continue to be actively engaged in the workforce.
- Fully funding the changes in the newly authorized Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) will help states enact the new requirements around child care assistance policies. Accessible and affordable child care options are critical pieces of workplace supports for working families. A section of this newly revised CCDBG law addresses the child care cliff effect. The State of Iowa submitted its plan to the federal government in March 2016, which allows child care assistance families to stay on assistance for 12 months instead of just six months, have a three-month job search if families receiving assistance lose employment and to maintain child care assistance for at least one year after the increased income exceeds the program limit.
- Increasing utilization of the USDA's SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program, a skills and job training program for SNAP participants administered by

the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

- Continuing funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Programs such as AmeriCorps and the SeniorCorps provide opportunities for over 5 million Americans to volunteer, gain valuable career experience and share experiences.

VETERAN SUPPORT

The Partnership supports the Home Base Iowa Initiative and encourages Congress to pass legislation and the Administration to provide greater opportunities for veterans. In particular, The Partnership supports ensuring that veterans receive comprehensive counseling and related services regarding all higher educational options, in addition to funding the Centers of Excellence for Veterans Success in the Higher Education Act.

IMMIGRATION

The United States benefits from the ability to attract international visitors, students and workers. The Partnership affirms that enabling talented and hard-working individuals to contribute to America will increase entrepreneurship, enhance international competitiveness and create more high-paying jobs for all Americans. It is critical that America remains competitive in attracting and retaining talented foreign nationals.

The Partnership supports immigration reform that provides national security and border control, while creating an effective and streamlined future flow program and legal status for unauthorized workers currently in the United States. Specifically, The Partnership supports:

- Expansion of the H-1B Visa Program for highly skilled workers. Employers in the U.S. must be able to hire the necessary talent to maintain and expand businesses and create more jobs and wealth for the U.S. economy. The H-1B program is important to U.S. economic competitiveness and technological leadership, as well as to the provision of health care and other critical services, especially in rural areas. Artificial caps on the category hurt U.S. competitiveness as U.S. companies continue to locate key personnel and projects outside the United States and as talented individuals move to countries that welcome such talent flow.
- Reasonable interpretation of the L-1 Visa Program for intra-company transferees. Restrictions on the L-1 intra-company visa category, a major conduit for foreign

investment in the United States that creates millions of jobs has the potential to jeopardize a significant part of the economy.

- Expansion of the Employment-Based (EB) Immigrant Visa Program. The overriding purpose of the EB green card system is to provide permanent residence to those individuals who add value to the U.S. economy. Many applicants utilizing the EB visa system are in fields related to science and mathematics. A large portion of these applicants are graduates of U.S. universities, accounting for over half of the post-graduate STEM degrees awarded in the United States. Almost all employment-based green card applicants already live and work in the United States on temporary visas. These individuals are paying taxes, contributing to economic growth and recovery through innovations and job creation, purchasing property, investing locally and raising the next generation as Americans. In addition, due to an arbitrary cap on immigration from any single country, many equally qualified EB applicants from highly populated countries must wait significantly longer than applicants from countries with smaller populations (e.g., over a decade for individuals from India compared with a few years for individuals from Egypt). Furthermore, for this reason, it seems appropriate for companies to count employees currently being sponsored in the EB green card process as U.S. employees, as opposed to non-immigrants, since those individuals have expressed an intention to become permanent, productive citizens of the U.S.
- Continuing implementation of the EB-5 Visa program for foreign-born investors in businesses that benefit the U.S. economy and create or save at least 10 full-time jobs for U.S. workers.
- Creating a clear path for foreign-born entrepreneurs to create business in the United States and hire U.S. workers.
- Creating temporary visa programs for workers to fill essential non-professional roles for which U.S. workers are not available, but not limited to seasonal jobs.
- Passage of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act which provides legal status for thousands of young people who were brought to this country as children, have grown up as Americans and now face an uncertain future.